

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 EB-08 CIAE-00 COME-00

DODE-00 DOTE-00 FMC-01 INR-07 NSAE-00 CG-00

DLOS-09 OES-07 INRE-00 L-03 /046 W

-----032218 021318Z /46

O P 021300Z DEC 77 ZFF-4

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO AMEMBASSY PARIS NIACT IMMEDIATE

SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0242

INFO AMEMBASSY LAGOS PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EWA, DM

SUBJ: SHIPPING DIFFICULTIES AT PORT OF COTONOU

REF: STATE 287109 (NOTAL)

1. REF TELEGRAM REPORTED THAT DEPARTMENT HAD BEEN CALLED BY A MR. BENNETT OF THE PETERSFIELD GROUP, STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT WHO WAS SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE IN COTONOU ON SATURDAY, DEC 3 VIA AIR AFRIQUE RK 518. TELEGRAM NOTED THAT BENNETT CLAIMS NIGERIAN BUSINESSMAN, A.G.N. HAMZA, HAD COLLECTED 600,000 DOLLARS RECENTLY FROM VARIOUS FIRMS BUT HAD FAILED TO PAY NECESSARY CUSTOMS DUTIES.

2. EMBASSY IS IN RECEIPT OF A COPY OF A LETTER DATED NOVEMBER 23, 1977 FROM ALHAJI (DR.) GARBE NAUTAN HAMZA (CHAIRMAN SEVEN SEAS SHIPPING, 34/36 BURMA ROAD, APAPA, LAGOS) TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF BENIN (GPRB) MIN OF TRANSPORTATION ACCUSING MR. L.R. BENNETT OF FRADULENTLY MISMANAGING AND EMBEZZLING FUNDS OF THE PETERSFIELD GROUP. HAMZA'S LETTER, A COPY OF WHICH SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN SENT TO EVERY CONCEIVABLE CONCERNED ADDRESSEE IN COTONOU INCLUDING POLICE AUTHORITIES, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STATES THAT BENNETT FAILED TO PAY DUTY ON CARGO PASSING THROUGH COTONOU PORT. HAMZA CLAIMS OUTSTANDING CHARGES OF 96,647,330 CFA (242 CFA EQUALS \$1.00 U.S.). LETTER SAYS:

QUOTE. MR. L.R. BENNETT'S ACTION ON THIS ISSUE HAS BEEN REPORTED TO AUTHORITIES BOTH IN REPUBLIC OF BENIN AND NIGERIA, AS A RESULT OF WHICH MR. L.R. BENNETT IS NOW A WANTED PERSON.

UNQUOTE. HAMZA FURTHER STATES: QUOTE. WE WERE INFORMED

THAT THE SAID PROPOSED BENNETT'S COMPANY TRANSWORLD INTERNATIONAL, INC., OF U.S.A. IS A BUBBLE AND A SMOKE SCREEN. IT HAS NO SIGNIFICANCE ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD. UNQUOTE.

3. FOR DEPARTMENT: WHILE WE WILL DO WHAT WE CAN TO ASSIST MR. BENNETT IN RESOLVING HIS PROBLEMS WITH HAMZA, WE WOULD PREFER TO PLAY AS INCONSPICUOUS ROLE AS POSSIBLE GIVEN THE FACT THAT BOTH PARTIES ARE ACCUSING EACH OTHER OF APPROXIMATELY THE SAME IMPROPRIETIES AND WE HAVE NO FURTHER INFORMATION ON MR. BENNETT. WE ARE INFORMING HIS REPRESENTATIVES IN PORTO NOVO OF HIS ARRIVAL. WE DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT BANNETT WILL BE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH MUCH AT THIS TIME SINCE THE GPRB IS RECOVERING FROM TWO AND A HALF DAY NOVEMBER 30 HOLIDAY WHICH HAS GENERATED ENORMOUS BACKLOG OF WORK. FOR SAME REASON WE DOUBT THAT GPRB WOULD HAVE RECEIVED WORD FROM ITS UN DELEGATION.

4. FOR PARIS: IF IT IS POSSIBLE TO DELIVER MESSAGE TO MR. BENNETT VIA AIR AFRIQUE PRIOR TO DEPARTURE OF RK 518 SCHEDULED TO LEAVE AT 2340 TONIGHT, WOULD APPRECIATE YOU INFORMING HIM THAT HE CAN EXPECT TO HAVE DIFFICULTY MAKING CONTACT WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS BECAUSE OF NATIONAL HOLIDAY AFTERMATH. DUE PRESENCE DELEGATIONS STILL IN TOWN FOR NATIONAL HOLIDAY, HOTEL SPACE IS TIGHT AND NON-OFFICIAL VISITORS HAVE FOUND THEMSELVES TURNED OUT INTO THE STREETS. WOULD SUGGEST THAT BENNETT DEFER TRAVEL TO COTONOU UNTIL HE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IS CERTAIN THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO MEET USEFULLY WITH GPRB OFFICIALS. REGRET SHORT NOTICE BUT REFTEL WAS RECEIVED TODAY NIACT IMMEDIATE. THOMPSON

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Message Attributes

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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 02-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
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